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**EIGHT INDICTED FOR OPERATING  
METHAMPHETAMINE SUPERLAB IN NORTHSTATE**

REDDING, CALIFORNIA--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott today announced the indictment of eight defendants in connection with the operation of a methamphetamine "superlab" in the Northstate. The meth lab operation was located in Trinity County, with additional criminal activities occurring in Shasta and Tehama counties. The lab was in operation until the defendants' arrests in July of this year.

Those charged in the indictment are Jose Sanchez, also known as Jose Luis Gonzalez, 46, of Cottonwood, Jesus Ramirez-Ortiz, 33, Arturo Rodrigo Luna-Rodriguez, Jr., 32, Alejandro Carrillo, 47, Gabino Sanchez-Gonzalez, 27, Noe Sanchez-Perez, 28, Juan Chipres-Guizar, 30, and Rosa Lara Calderon, 23. Sanchez and Luna-Rodriguez are residents of Cottonwood. Hometowns of the remaining defendants are unknown. All of the defendants are in custody except Alejandro Carrillo, who is a fugitive. A warrant for Carrillo's arrest has been issued.

The indictment charges the defendants with conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, and criminal forfeiture of property derived from the proceeds of the methamphetamine production and sales.

According to United States Attorney Scott, a recent crackdown on methamphetamine labs in the lower Central Valley has pushed so called "superlabs" northward into Shasta, Tehama, and Trinity counties. The DEA considers a meth lab a "superlab" if it can produce at least 10 pounds of methamphetamine per operation. According to DEA agents, the lab shut down in Trinity County was capable of producing between 60 and 75 pounds per operation. "The joint investigation and subsequent arrest of the eight defendants is an example of how teamwork between local, state, and federal law enforcement is supposed to work. DEA agents have brought with them a wider array of investigative techniques, manpower, and financial resources which will result in opportunities to help local law enforcement bring down these superlabs," Scott said.

In addition, Scott noted that the United States Attorney's involvement is appropriate in

prosecuting large methamphetamine labs. "The prosecution of meth manufacturers is a top priority for the United States Attorney's Office because this drug has such a destructive effect on our communities," Scott said, pointing out that "Federal prosecutors are able to obtain much greater sentences for these types of crimes." Under federal sentencing guidelines, if convicted, the defendants in this case will face sentences of no less than ten years, and up to life in federal prison.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

This case is the result of a joint investigation between the North State Initiative of the California Multi-Jurisdictional Methamphetamine Enforcement Team ("CalMMET") and the federal DEA.

In June 2002, the DEA opened its Redding office. The DEA agents have been working with local law enforcement in order to bring more resources to bear against those who manufacture methamphetamine in the Northstate. Gordon Taylor, the Agent in Charge of the Redding DEA office, said, "This investigation was successful because of the close working relationship we have with the CalMMET and other local law enforcement in the Northstate. DEA values the input and assistance of local and state law enforcement, and is working hard in the Northstate to build partnerships that will get the job done."

Local agencies participating in the North State Initiative of CalMMET are the sheriff's departments of Butte, Shasta, Siskiyou and Tehama counties, the Redding Police Department and the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement. The Tehama County District Attorney's Office, Trinity County Sheriff's Department and California Highway Patrol also assisted in the investigation and arrests.

Trinity County Sheriff Lorrac Craig commended the team, stating, "The results of this operation demonstrate the value of multi-agency cooperation. This type of meth lab operation would have been beyond the resources of the Trinity County Sheriff's Department and may have gone undetected for some time. The involvement of my officers with CalMMET made for a smooth transition when local agency resources were necessary to handle post-arrest needs. I appreciate the efforts of the CalMMET task force and the job they are doing."

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Mary Grad and Matthew Stegman

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